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ABSTRACT

Incorporating diverse viewpoints and featuring articles by teachers and administrators on both the university and the elementary-secondary levels, this focused journal issue offers useful practical suggestions and pragmatic guidance for all levels of curriculum development. The articles and their authors are as follows: (1)"Teaching Students to Ask Questions" (Patricia A. Solfest); (2) "Outdoor World" (Craig A. Akey); (3) "A Perspective on the Guide: A Curricular Framework for the Language Arts" (Mary Meiser); (4) "Preparing Teachers: Fit the Training to the Need" (Leo J. Hertzel); (5) "Equity, English and Computers" (Mary Louise Gomez); (6) "Oral History as Composition" (Diane Long Hoeveler); (7) "Are English Curriculum Guides a Put-On?" (Thomas A. Lund); (8) "A Superintendent's View of the Language Arts" (William Josten); and (9) "Teacher Evaluation: From the Superintendency and the English Supervisor's Positions" (Carol S. Hertz and Karl V. Hertz). (A book review section is also included.) (NKA)

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

For English Teachers At All Levels
October, 1986 Volume 29, No. 1

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WISCONSIN ENGLISH JOURNAL

For English Teachers at All Levels

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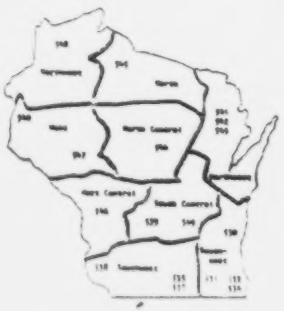

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Contents of This Issue

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Jarvis Bush Award
Teaching Students to Ask the Questions 2
Patricia A. Solfest, Altoona Middle School

Creative Teaching Award
Their Past Has Made Our Present (WEJ, Apr 84) 6
Virginia Everson, Mondovi High School

Outdoor World 6
Craig A. Akey, Clintonville Senior High School

A Perspective on the Guide: A Curricular Framework for the Language Arts 10
Mary Meiser, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Preparing Teachers: Fit the Training to the Need 14
Leo J. Hertzel, University of Wisconsin-Superior

Equity, English and Computers 18
Mary Louise Gomez, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Oral History as Composition 23
Diane Long Hoeveler, Rufus King High School, Milwaukee

Are English Curriculum Guides a Put-On? 26
Thomas A. Lund, East High School, Wauwatosa

A Superintendent's View of the Language Arts 28
William Josten, Germantown School District

Teacher Evaluation: From the Superintendency and the English Supervisor's Positions 30
Carol S. Hertz and Karl V. Hertz,
Mequon-Thiensville School District

Book Reviews 13

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JARVIS BUSH COMPOSITION TEACHING AWARD

The 1986 Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English Jarvis Bush Award for Successful Techniques in Teaching Composition was awarded to Patricia Solfest.

TEACHING STUDENTS TO ASK QUESTIONS

PATRICIA A. SOLFEST
Altoona Middle School

As teachers, one of the primary goals ought to be a sort of planned obsolescence. We should be teaching students the skills to become independent learners, able to read and evaluate information without us, capable of asking and answering their own questions. But how do we go about this task? What do we need to teach students in order that they can teach themselves? These were the questions I hoped to address in a four week unit developed for use in middle school language arts class.

The idea for the unit grew out of a problem facing a science teacher with whom I team on projects. She often assigned magazine and newspaper articles about topics students were discussing in class. Rather than write out a set of questions for each article, she wondered whether there wasn't a better way to encourage students to independently learn the material by asking their own questions. The idea seemed worth pursuing.

Are questioning strategies an effective way to develop independent learning? Which strategies should be taught? Can student be expected to apply the strategies on their own? These were to be our starting points.

Over the last twenty years, many educators have examined the questions teachers ask in belief that certain types will develop critical thinking in students (Sanders 1966; Cunningham, 1971; Manson and Clegg, 1970). As a result, nearly twenty one classification systems have been produced (Riegle, 1976).

But what were the student questions? Research has just begun to be directed toward an understanding of how their questions affect learning (Andre and Anderson, 1978-79; Raphael, 1982; Sandberg, 1981). Some initial studies have found that teaching students self-questioning strategies, and making them aware of the sources of information required for the answers, improved their comprehension (Raphael and Pearson, 1982; Raphael, 1984).

This research gave indications that questioning not only played an important role in learning, but that students could be taught to use their own questioning strategies as well. We decided to try to teach students how to ask good questions in the hope that they would begin to take a more active role in their own learning.

We chose to modify some of the suggestions from the studies (Willman, 1985) and concentrated of instructing students on how to ask four types of questions. These four worked well with literature as well as content materials, and were common to a number of different taxonomies

used to classify questions. They were: Literal Knowledge, Inferential Comprehension, Application, and Evaluation. After some introductory work which I would provide in language arts class, students would apply the strategies with the science class articles, and in the study of a novel, *Call of the Wild*.

I began explaining the project to the students. I told them of our goal of encouraging them to be more active learners. I described our conviction that they were capable of asking good questions and finding their own answers. The first few class sessions were spent talking about the importance of questions, and how not all questions were alike in the demands they place on seeking an answer. Students were surprised to learn that studies have estimated that nearly 80% of school time is occupied with questions and answer interaction (Gall, 1970). They were less surprised that teachers ask most of the questions, up to 350 per day (Gall, 1970). Students began to accept that questioning already played a crucial role in their academic lives.

During these initial sessions, I also began describing the four types of questions we would work with:

TYPE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Knowledge	Know the facts.	Recall the name of the first President. List the states in alphabetical order.
Comprehension	Understand the ideas.	Summarize the plot of the story. Interpret the words of a character.
Application	Use facts and ideas.	Solve the math problem. Demonstrate how to use a microscope.
Evaluation	Judge ideas.	Rate the speech using a set of criteria. Evaluate your progress in science based on last year's test scores.

A short story was used to model the four types of questions and explain how relevent information could be found in the text, the reader's experience, or both. After a few of these "talk-throughs," students began to examine some classroom materials. The students were interested to learn that some of the studies have shown up to 90% of the questions asked in classrooms are of the knowledge type and can be answered by examining the text for explicit statements (Torrance and Hansen, 1965). They began bringing in their assignments from other classes and together evaluated the types of questions most often found. They discovered that their social studies worksheets tended to rely heavily on knowledge questions, while math and science used many more applications. What became fascinating about this process were the discussions the class would have over question categories. Students argued whether some questions were knowledge or comprehension type, rightly noting that it often depended on the background knowledge of the reader. They also observed that a teacher might intend a question to be a particular type, but that problems in vocabulary or experience might change it for the students. They began to develop a new appreciation for the art of good questioning.

Students were ready to begin designing their own questions. I invited them to think of questions about our football team and then categorize them by type. Examples included:

Knowledge: Match the players with their correct positions.
List the number of touchdowns the team scored in the last game.

Comprehension: Describe how a half-back option play works.
Describe why a defense blitzes.

Application: Demonstrate a quarterback sneak play.
Explain what play you'd call if you had a third down on the one yard line.

Evaluation: Rate the team's opponents based on win/loss records.
Judge the coach's decision to go for the touchdown on fourth down last week.

From this point we expanded into developing questions for class work. In language arts, students worked on various short stories. In science, they began using the magazine articles. This cross-over into different content areas was important, providing students with a sense of the usefulness of these strategies, and helping expand the range of their work.

During the third week, students in language arts were introduced to some of the vocabulary and background in preapration for reading *Call of the Wild*. They were also divided into seven groups - one for each chapter of the book - and given the assignment to develop questions to teach the material of their chapter to the rest of the class. The questions had to be evenly balanced among all four types. Students worked with their groups and did overview reading of the book, keeping lists of the major episodes of each chapter. Later, as students prepared for each day's presentations, they would review the lists.

The following week the students made their presentations. They proved to be imaginative, entertaining, and educational. Some groups modified game show formats such as "Jeopardy" or "Tic Tac Toe." Questions of increasing difficulty and type received more points for the team. And since many of the answers required interpretations, students had to satisfactorily defend the reasons to a panel of judges. The other teams could challenge with their own evidence.

Another group spent days creating a room-sized game board and die. The number on the die corresponded to the various types of questions. Acceptable answers allowed students to move around the board and challenge other players when landing on the same square. Again, because the teams were responsible for evaluating the contestants' answers, they developed some understanding for the various possible interpretations.

The quality of student questions demonstrated that they were applying the question strategies: "Did Buck's life at Judge Miller's prepare him to live in the Yukon?"; "Why is it important that Buck learn 'The Law of the Club' from the man in the red sweater?"; "What was more important to Buck's survival - his intelligence or his instincts?"; "Rate each of Buck's owners in terms of his treatment of Buck."

A third presentation involved members of the group assuming the identities of various characters or concepts from the book. Examples included the man in the red sweater, Spitz, and "The Law of Fang and Club." The presenter gave clues to the identity beginning with very broad ones. As teams guessed incorrectly, more specific clues were given until the correct one was guessed. Another group dramatized a chapter and then had students ask questions about the characters. It was interesting to see students invent whole backgrounds for various characters to help explain some of their actions.

We concluded our study with a test written by the students using questions of all four types. In many ways, the test was more difficult than ones I had used with previous classes, yet students performed much better. Some of the success can be attributed to students knowing some of the questions ahead of time, but I also believe their high scores were the result of an improved understanding of the questioning process, and a feeling of greater participation in their own learning.

After the tests were returned, we reflected on the activities of the unit. Both students and teachers were pleased with what had been accomplished. The students indicated that they had developed a greater grasp of what is involved in asking good questions, and felt more responsible for learning their chapters. They liked the feeling that they were in control in the activities of the class, and said they were motivated to do a good job because they were presenting to each other. Meanwhile, we were able to see the results of our study being applied in other content areas and felt confident that students would be able to use the strategies they had learned.

Looking back I realize that none of the activities the students chose to do for the novel study were particularly unique. What was unique was that students had thought of them and had been willing to invest a good deal of time and effort into preparing them for each other. Not only had students examined the content of some excellent literature, but they had learned a process that they would be able to apply in many different aspects of their lives in and out of school. And aren't those the best lessons of all?

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CREATIVE TEACHING AWARDS

The twelfth Lucille S. Pooley Teaching Award, sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English, was presented to Virginia Everson, Mondovi High School, at the Council's spring conference. Titled "Their Past Has Made Our Present," it was published in the April, 1984 issue of the Journal. Craig A. Akey received the runner-up award.

OUTDOOR WORLD

CRAIG A. AKEY
Clintonville Senior High School

Designing an elective course for high school juniors and seniors, particularly those who will terminate their education with their diploma, if they get that, can be a real challenge. The fact that these students have disliked English for ten or more years doesn't help the situation either. In our rural Waupaca County town, surrounded by the Wolf, Embarass, and Pigeon Rivers, trapping, fishing, year-around hunting, snowmobiling, and probably poaching are all activities that students actively pursue much more than reading or writing. A close look at these students' hobbies and interests, however, provided me with a semester course, Outdoor Literature, that motivates more reading and writing than I would expect from any class.

I taught this class as a semester credit for the first time this fall, 1985. I believe it was a genuine success and would like to share some content ideas and writing ideas that I felt were especially successful. Though the reading and writing coincided, I will treat them separately.

Content was divided into four main thematic areas: Endangered Species, Sportsman's Ethics, Ecological Relationships, and The Question of Hunting. An excellent novel choice to complement a study of endangered species is *The Silent Sky* (Landfall Press, 1965) by Albert Eckert. Eckert tells his story through the third person description of a passenger pigeon which is born into a flock of millions and becomes the last of its species. Eckert emphasizes the effects of nature and the natural habits of the passenger pigeon itself as a cause of its extinction but also reminds us of man's greed and thoughtlessness as the species is decimated. The book is also of interest to students because the flock often migrated through Wisconsin, nesting west of Tomahawk. It is a motivating book with students being most interested in the assaults on the nesting grounds.

Another novel with a Wisconsin flavor is Mel Ellis' *Wild Goose, Brother Goose*. (Grosset and Dunlap, 1969) This is the well-known tale of Duke, a Canada Goose, and his migrating and survival through the Horicon Marsh in Central Wisconsin. It works well with a unit of sportsman's ethics because Ellis was fired from his position as *Field and Stream* associate editor for his portrayal of hunters in this novel. An interesting follow-up of Duke can be gained by reading the Ellis "Little Lakes" columns in *Wisconsin Sportsman*.

I turned to Eckert again for a novel emphasizing the relationship of each living thing to its environment. The book is *The Wild Season* (Landfall Press, 1981). It creatively traces a food chain, beginning with a large-mouth bass eating a frog and continues the chain, ending in a cyclic pattern with another bass ready to devour another frog at the end. Man interferes at times, sometimes positively, sometimes negatively.

Also making the book interesting to the students is the fact that each species that is part of the system at Eckert's mythical Oak Lake is common to our Wisconsin ecological system. Eckert combines a good blend of theme with factual information in presenting his appreciation of nature.

To supplement activities on the question of hunting, we read our most popular book, *Monarch of Deadman Bay* (Little Brown, 1969), by Roger Caras. Caras is an internationally known naturalist and has done environmental spots on ABC television. Monarch is a Kodiak bear on Kodiak Island and is pursued by a variety of trophy hunters, some more ethical than others. One is a violator, one a professional who only wants the trophy for prestige, another is a more common sort who saved his quarters for the trip of a lifetime, and one hunts with a camera. Each hunter provides interesting discussion and analysis by class members as the students support or object to Caras' presentation. Caras weaves many other themes through his book as well in helping the reader to understand, appreciate, and respect what nature has to offer us all.

There are as many outdoor poems, short stories, essays, news articles, and other writings as the instructor is willing to find. The two *Heartland* anthologies, edited by Lucien Stryk (Northern Illinois University Press, 1967 and 1975) provide many poems, including Dennis Schmitz's "The Wounded Doe" and Norbert Krapf's "Skinning a Rabbit", that provides experiences that are common to Central Wisconsin students. *Sounds and Silences* edited by Richard Peck (Dell, 1970) contains William Stafford's "Travelling Through the Dark" and Robinson Jeffers' "Hurt Hawks."

Many traditional authors provide good short story sources: Hemingway, Faulkner, London, and Bradbury to name a few. Stephen Crane's "Lynx Hunting" from *The Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane* (Doubleday, 1963) is a dandy story about a young boy's first hunt. The state outdoor magazines *Wisconsin Sportsman, Fins and Feathers,* etc. also are good sources for reading material. There are often stories and articles about poachers, wardens, area history, as well as good fiction. One of the best appeared in *Fins and Feathers* (January, 1977) by Steve Grooms. It is titled "The Call of the Wild" and deals with a pheasant hunt in the year 2005. All of the four main course themes are touched upon in this speculative piece.

To supplement the reading we obtained an excellent sound filmstrip, "What They Say About Hunting" from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency, a five-part news sequence on poaching from WLUK-TV in Green Bay, interviewed a local game warden, and interviewed Roger Caras via a portable conference telephone. Again, projects are limitless.

These readings, viewings, discussions, and interviews provided the basis for many writing assignments. Previous to this class, many had never read an essay opposing hunting, so reaction by some was nearly vehement. It was no problem to have free writing activities when students were willing to express their point of view on issues of much concern to them. For now, though, I would like to describe two writing assignments which met with great success.

First was the letter writing exercise. Many of these students had never written a letter, unless it had been part of a *Warriner* exercise. When we write them, we send them. First, we found lists of environmental organizations of state agencies. We discussed letter format and discussed what kind of information we would like to receive. This first letter writing activity was a three day project. When final drafts were completed and the school-provided envelopes were addressed--we even practiced letter folding--the letters were mailed through the school mail (free to students). At first, I was afraid that this activity would be too juvenile for rough,

tough junior and senior boys but it wasn't. Within a week I was constantly stopped in the hall with "Mr. Akey, my letter came. Shall I bring it to class?" Of course I wanted that because the material received provided good subject material for class reading and discussion.

Several weeks later, we wrote to hunting and fishing guides across the United States. Some even wrote for information about African safaris. We took the addresses from any advertised in the several outdoor magazines in our school library. This time the letter writing only took a class and a half as many students remembered the letter format. We discussed questions to ask in our letters, wrote, folded, sealed, and mailed. Again we got a good response of brochures and pamphlets.

We also got an idea for another letter. Many guide services sent reference lists. So, some weeks later, we wrote again. Each student had the name of a hunter who had gone to Montana, or Wyoming, or New Mexico and now tried to find if the hunter got his money's worth. Reference responses weren't as good but I did notice that the letter writing activity barely took 45 minutes for all to complete.

We wrote letters; there is no end to ideas here either. By giving the students a real audience, the experience was fun. And by spacing the assignments, the recall of format and process seemed to make an impression that maybe will be remembered better than if we had done one and then forgotten it.

Our other major writing effort involved a book of hunting stories, *Foxfire*. Each student interviewed a relative or friend or neighbor who had hunted in Waupaca County some years ago. We tried to isolate a specific experience: The Most Memorable Hunt, or the First Hunt, for example. We talked in class a great deal about questioning techniques: how to get specific, what kind of specifics are important, etc. The students had then three weeks to gather their information. We did this during deer season when the stories can be especially good. Then we wrote, and rewrote, and rewrote again. Knowing that the stories would be published helped alleviate the tedium of rewriting. Even when I read the early drafts, though I was impressed by both the stories and the writing. And, there were several surprised teachers in the school when it was seen what this class could do. We designed a cover and with help from the high school typing class and the printing class, a book of Waupaca County hunting stories was a reality.

Before I stop writing here, let me include a favorite poem, the author of which I don't recall:

FISHING TRIP

Joe digs a big Old Judge can
full of worms (with a few grubs),
your dad makes doughballs
out of ship-stuff and sorgum,
gets chicken guts from the butcher free,
the three of you go out past
the White Bridge and seine
a thick bucket of minnows,
come back and load the car
with the gear: a .22, carbide
lamp, flashlight, couple of cots,
lines, hooks, leaders, sinkers,
corks, plugs, flies, reels,
trot lines, bacon, eggs, bread,
flour, corn meal, lard, salt, pepper,
silverware, paper, plates, matches,
kerosene, and something you forget,
soda pop, a case of Falstaff, fifth
of Seagram's and drive on down
to Clearwater to set up camp, rent
a boat, scrounge a couple of extra
cans, set out the trotlines, piss
in the woods, and hope for good luck
these next two days on the river.

It sounds like a darn good trip to me. And that's what teaching the class was. In the words of one of my students as an evaluation at course's end, "I liked the class because we all got involved in the stuff. I ain't much for reading but them Books weren't half bad."

Supplemental Writing Assignments:

1. A "Bio" poem using an animal or person from any book we read (Some became a part of our book.)

2. Any "form" poem in relation to a personal experience or to a situation in our readings.

3. Dialogue assignments - between Mel Ellis and his editor, for example.

4. Narratives:

   a. What I like about hunting besides the kill
   b. Getting ready for hunting
   c. First hunt
   d. Most memorable hunt
   e.

5. Comparisons:

   a. Bow hunting/Gun hunting
   b. Lead shot/Steel shot
   c. Ice fishing/Summer fishing
   d. Snowshoeing/Snowmobiling
   e. Downhill/Cross country skiing
   f.

6. Descriptions:

   a. a Tip-up
   b. a Trap
   c. a Spinning Reel
   d. a Snowshoe
   e. a Good Deer Blind
   f.

7. Position Paper (for or against)

   a. Trapping
   b. Fish Locators
   c. Changing Fishing or Hunting Seasons
   d. Indian spearing
   e.

8. Process

   a. Cleaning a gun
   b. Building a blind
   c. Maintaining a snowmobile
   d. Fly tying
   e. Skinning a rabbit
   f.

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A PERSPECTIVE ON THE GUIDE: A CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK FOR THE LANGUAGE ARTS

MARY MEISER
University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire

A Philosophical and Theoretical Base

Perhaps the most important aspect of the new *Guide to Curriculum Planning* in the English Language Arts (DPI, 1986) lies in the word *guide*. Although the *Guide* is a comprehensive work, it is not (1) a model curriculum, (2) a mandated curriculum, or (3) "the" curriculum for the state of Wisconsin. As a group of teachers and administrators working on the *Guide*, we defined our task as one of resource: to provide teachers and curriculum planners with a conceptual framework on which to build local curriculum. To that end, we brought together the most recent research on language and the best of classroom practice in the language arts today. We read, we talked, we listened, we wrote. And, finally, we developed the base upon which this curriculum guide rests. Three key concepts form this base: language in use; language in process; language as a developmental phenomenon.

Language in use underscores the communicative function of the language arts. It means that no matter which of the language arts - listening, speaking, reading or writing - we are teaching, we are concerned with real language experience. In brief, it means that our students know why they are communicating, to whom their communication will go, and which form will best suit that purpose and audience. They also know what is being communicated to them, its purpose and how they are being affected. Language as process, the second concept, reminds us that language is an active, on-going cognitive act --- not just a subject area. Each of the language arts is a process, and each of the language arts needs to be approached as such. Students need to understand them as such and to understand themselves within the process of reading literature, of speaking or writing, for example. Real language power comes from "knowing what we know," from being able to modify the process. The third concept, language as a developmental phenomenon, shapes our awareness of what students can or cannot do. The process of physical and mental maturation places certain cognitive and linguistic constraints on students; as teachers, we need sensitivity to these constraints.

These concepts translate into a conceptual framework which places the student, not the subject matter, at the center of the curriculum. We realized full well that such a framework might run counter to the texts in place, to the scores of examinations on file, to the curriculum guides in district offices. However, fortified by the belief that language arts teachers do view the student as a user of language --- rather than as a scholar of language --- we abandoned approaches which emphasize the study of language rather than the creative use of language. We also took issue with approaches which deny the holistic nature of language, approaches which suggest that language is best taught as a series of discrete sub-skills. And, finally, we stressed the developmental nature of language, that there are cognitive and linguistic realities which determine how and when we learn most effectively.

Applying The Conceptual Framework

When we apply this conceptual framework to each of the language arts, we find that the communicative function, language in use, relies on purpose,

audience and form. For example: we write to communicate to someone, even if that someone is self; we shape our writing based on that audience; we choose to accomplish our purpose and reach the audience. This sounds almost simplistic; yet, if we are honest about most classroom writing, we know that many students lack purpose, equate audience with teacher-examiner, and use an invariable form, the standard five-paragraph essay. This contradicts the most basic function of language: to be useful as a means of communication. Similarly, it violates the reality of our world, where we communicate best with a repertoire of voice and forms, when we know how to mix and match them, and, when we have a genuine purpose for doing so.

Placing the student at the center of the curriculum, as a creator and user of language, demands a view of language as a process. This means a shift in perspective, from language as a subject area to language as an on-going cognitive act. The past ten years have provided us with better knowledge of language as a cognitive process. Similarly, in our growing understanding of language, we have come to realize the developmental implications of such knowledge. We have, for example, limited memory for storing information, affecting our ability to "hang on" to complex sentences; we have a limited capacity to construct certain linguistic relationships, such as cause and effect, prior to middle school; we have a changing level of response to literature, its language and themes; we have difficulty dealing with abstract concepts, such as parts of speech, until late in senior high. Viewing language developmentally, we also approach student errors with new insights: students at the edge of their present language competency. Such errors are logical in both reading and writing, often over-extensions of their knowledge, rather than random samples of carelessness. And, as teachers, we are increasingly aware that our role is best defined as facilitators of language processes which are occurring naturally. Given this framework, the scope and sequence of the new *Guide* is a departure from the traditional format and content.

Breathing Life into Scope and Sequence

Scope and sequence: most of us picture a detailed chart which tells us which concepts or skills are to be introduced, mastered, or reviewed and at which level of the curriculum. This picture, as one colleague points out, resembles an auto parts catalogue. The analogy is apt for several reasons. First, the language is broken down into discrete parts, ready to be issued at the appropriate moment. Second, the appropriate moment is prescribed: when X is here, insert Y. Third, the underlying assumption is one of the machine needing parts, of parts breaking down or wearing out. This may work for autos, but it does not work for humans and language. Research in linguistics, cognition, reading, and composition has shown us quite clearly that language is a matter of synthesis, of simultaneous operations, and not one of discrete parts. We use language holistically; we do not need to approach the teaching of language through discrete parts. Consequently, a scope and sequence which suggests that we do, runs contrary to what we know about language acquisition, to what we know about gaining language proficiency.

The scope and sequence of the *Guide* thus builds on what we do know of language learning and processing. It represents the most recent knowledge in our field. At the same time, it returns to a concept which is developmentally sound, but not new: the spiral curriculum. The spiral curriculum suggests that at every level of the curriculum, K-12, we do return to the same concept or skill, but we do so with increasing sophistication. This does not mean we repeat the same lesson in grades seven, ten, and twelve, as texts so often imply. And it does mean we act on our know-

ledge of child and adolescent development in relation to the language arts. A good example lies in composition. The writing process involves prewriting, drafting, revising and editing; this process remains the same for students at all levels of the curriculum. A primary school writer is perfectly capable of working in and through each of these stages in text production; so is a senior high student. But as teachers, our emphasis and focus in these processes will change as students mature. In prewriting, for example, the concept of audience is quite difficult for the primary age student, thus any focus on it will be understandably limited. We may introduce it and refer to it, but we would not expect a young writer to deal with it well. By senior high, though, the student is cognitively ready to entertain several points of view, and the concept of audience may become a focal point, an emphasis.

In parallel fashion, aspects of literature are understood developmentally. We teach about character at all levels, but the level of expected response varies markedly from primary level students to those of the senior high. What we teach changes in both degree and range, the literary materials chosen to match the level of anticipated response and the concepts being taught. Further, in the sense of holistic response, character is not taught in isolation but in relation to other elements of literature and language.

It is important, then, that we perceive of scope and sequence as a continuum in language development, and that we consider the importance of students working in real language situations --- not in bits and pieces of language, but in whole discourse. Scope and sequence in the *Guide* emphasizes the student as a creator and user of language. Given this emphasis, only whole discourse makes sense. We realize, however, that texts and curriculum guides in many districts have imposed a different model, one which learning and language research refute. The school model most prevalent says that competence is acquired through mastery of parts. Thus, writing curriculum is organized around movement from part to part: word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and essay. This curriculum not only dictates a part to whole approach, but also one of correctness and clarity preceding fluency. Again, we know writing develops differently: from fluency to clarity, and finally, to correctness. We also know that judgments of conventions and syntax are not reliable as indicators of language growth; writing is not always better from draft to draft or paper to paper. New ideas, more complicated tasks, cause students to lose control. As students become risk-takers, they have more potential for error. Moreover, acquisition of new language skills may cause previously mastered skills to disappear for a while. These are realities of language growth, yet few areas in a traditional scope and sequence would indicate this is so. Instead, it suggests that all students will master various skills and concepts at a particular grade level --- when we know from our classrooms that this just isn't the case.

Traditional scope and sequence thus places the emphasis on the subject matter and a lock-step approach to mastery. At the same time, it places a burden on many teachers who instinctively know that their students need whole language experience. Such teachers feel caught between the curriculum and testing, especially if they do not know that whole language experience will produce good test results, and that they need not fear for their students' performance on language tests. These teachers may also feel isolated, and worse, powerless to effect the kind of curriculum which fosters language growth. The new *Guide* supports such teachers, offering them a solid foundation on which to build, yet, encouraging them to shape their curriculum through their unique perspective of school and community.

Final Words

We worked on the *Guide* for more than a year, and through all those weeks and months, we had one goal before us: to produce a guide which was intellectually honest, which did not ignore or hedge on the issues of language arts today, and to be useful as a framework for curriculum in Wisconsin schools. We kept one audience before us: the classroom teacher. We hope, therefore, that teachers will view the *Guide* as one teacher, Marie Leonard of South Junior High School, Eau Claire, did:

The new guide, it seems to me, is relevant, practical, and totally consistent with what I have observed over twenty years of teaching. It provides me with a yardstick by which to measure what I am doing. It gives me freedom to be creative in the classroom and have complete ownership of my daily plans. And, wonderfully, it provides an authority we can call upon to justify to parents and administrators the changes we would like to make in time-honored strategies that have proven so ineffective. *A Guide to Curriculum Planning in English Language Arts* should encourage positive growth in programs that truly make students better communicators.

BOOKS

Dygaard, Thomas J. *Halfback Tough.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986

This action packed football story also focuses on a theme of adjustment and change. A natural player, Joe Atkins' football successes are marred by his disorientation and social defensiveness. A school newcomer, a former gang troublemaker, he plays tough guy while moving toward change in values and academics. His personal conflict reaches a peak in the aftermath of the gang's disasterous visit to town in conjunction with the season's big game. A strong book.

Mazer, Norma Fox. *Downtown.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984.

Pete Greenwood, alias Pax Connors, living with his uncle is living a lie that his parents are dead. Actually they've been in hiding for eight years after a terrorist bombing they committed "accidentally" kills two people. Pete is haunted by the fear of being discovered. He meets Cary, a foster daughter, whose own parents, heroine and alcohol addicts have damaged her emotionally. Their budding relationship intertwines the philosophical emotional tension until it explodes. An intriguing view of the "ills of the fathers being visited on the children."

Klein, Norma. *Angel Face.* New York: Viking Press, 1984.

A marriage collapse brings into sharp focus the internal tensions of the family and the ways its members try to handle themselves and each other. Jason, the mother's mainstay, attempts to ride with the storm, adopting a passive demeanor. Life does not ease up for him, neither with his peers nor with his family. Issues cannot be ignored nor can traumatic events.

Rabinowich, Ellen. *Underneath I'm Different.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1983.

Overweight and badgered by her assertive mother, Amy enrolls in a ballet class. She's disbelieving when the pianist--also a sculptor--is attracted to her. The relationship develops. They discover the persons they are underneath, affecting each other's life. Amy grows in confidence and self-understanding.

PREPARING TEACHERS: FIT THE TRAINING TO THE NEED

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In an introduction to a collection of Nancy Matrin's essays, Janet Emig writes, "The position held by most departments of literature is one of unabashed and unswerving elitism, and of historical over-detail, a belief that it is more significant to discover the shop in Trieste where Joyce may have bought his underwear than to read, much less appreciate, the total written outpourings of all the children in Trieste, New York and London."[1] It is not necessary to agree completely with the values implied in Emig's statement to acknowledge that she raises questions that merit thought by members of the profession who wonder from time to time what we are about. Though Emig's statement is directed to "department of literature," most of us would probably relate it to departments of English in colleges and universities where, for at least forty years from now, the study of literature has been the center of the department's soul. Emig's statement is one of a chorus of similar cries raised recently. A sweep of forces -- political, economic, cultural -- are generating questions about the proper role of English departments in general and the place of literary studies within the departments in particular.

I want here to briefly address one part of one of these larger questions: the emphasis English departments place on literary studies in the preparation of language arts teachers for our schools. I spend a good part of my professional time with the language arts teachers. I visit their classrooms, talk with them about their work. Frequently I ask them about the kinds of preparation they had back in college for the work they are now doing. Their tales are often tales of innocence and frustration.

I also attend English program meetings at my university where I teach some writing and some literature.[2] I have a foot in two very different worlds.

My experience with language arts teachers in their classrooms leads me to the firm belief that the English teaching profession should alter substantially the emphasis it now places on literary studies in the preparation of language arts teachers. A great deal more time and effort in teacher preparation programs should be devoted to writing and writing instruction. The education future teachers receive should be designed realistically with their future professional duties in mind, and those duties will require a broad knowledge of writing and the teaching of writing. Quite simple, when literary studies are emphasized to the detriment of writing studies in teacher training programs (the situation that exists now in most of our institutions), young teachers graduate poorly prepared for the classroom work they will be asked to do.

For quite a long while now, English professors have thought of literary studies as the soul of their department. This view prevails even in departments where the training of language arts teachers for secondary schools is an important responsibility. Generally, these English professors become professors because of their love for literature, its history, criticism, and interpretation. They take much pleasure in

literary study. Devoted readers, they are not often writers, generally they are not very much interested in teaching other people how to write or how to teach writing. Their love is for finely polished finished products.

It is common practice for these professors to give the teaching of writing a rather low place on their academic prestige ladder. Perhaps they do not openly announce that the teaching of writing is a less important activity that the teaching of Victorian novels or Middle English drama. Rather, they let writing find its own level in their department where the tenured and privileged always choose literature.

Freshman composition courses, for example, are considered unpleasant work. Almost no one wants to do that job. Given the assignment, young instructors do not hide their distaste, looking eagerly to the time they will attain proper rank or seniority to escape even one section.* Other writing courses do not fare much better, peripheral things of no great importance in the over-all scheme. The professors prefer literature.

As might be expected, the preparation future language arts teachers receive in this environment is largely a literature experience, perhaps a dozen literature courses. Students survey British and American literature. They look closely at Pope and Whitman. They learn eighteen definitions for romanticism. They stay up late at parties arguing Keats. Measured in time, they do a great deal more reading than writing. When they are asked to write, they are asked to write about their reading. They know their professors are much more interested in finished products than in the processes that produced those products. The students have no reason to believe this preformance is not grounded in arcane knowledge.

Graduated, certified, the fresh language arts teacher arrives at the new job. The teacher will teach ninth grade English. This teacher is to teach a lot of writing. "... a good writing program assures that writing is taught rather than merely assigned." says the curriculum guide. "...teachers must use their expertise to assure that students know how to write."3

Pleasantly stuffed with Blake and Dreiser, sharing at least some of the values and prejudices of the old professors, this teacher is not prepared. Teach writing?

As many English teachers note, my educational preparation was largely in literature. I need to learn as much about the teaching of writing as I can.
A Wisconsin teacher

When I was in college I studied British literature and women's literature and Black literature and Caribbean literature and I think even one course in Eskimo literature, and none of it has helped me one bit trying to teach these eighth graders to write a paragraph.
A Wisconsin teacher

The ... School Board has stated that they want the emphasis in their language arts program to be placed on grammar and composition. Literature is not being taught in grades seven through twelve at this time.
A Wisconsin teacher

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*The weight of paper loads in freshman composition courses is an important factor in the desire of young instructors to escape this assignment. Most young instructors have no knowledge of alternate methods of response to written work other than laborious "correcting" of individual errors. The introduction of enlightened response procedures does help eliminate some of the dislike for this writing course.

There is a strong feeling that there is not enough emphasis being placed on the (sic) "the basics" by our curriculum. These "basics" should be interpreted to mean the formal study of grammar, punctuation, usage and sentence structure.

A Wisconsin principal in a letter to language arts teachers suspected of teaching too much literature

If a prospective teacher sends a transcript with forty credits in literature and no writing background, forget it.

A Wisconsin school administrator[4]

Teach *writing?* This teacher considers: grammar? diagramming? some snappy drill? outlines? What does Warriner say about outlines? (The textbook is the teacher's rock of refuge.) Whatever this teacher selects from this list, the results are not likely to be very encouraging. These ninth grade kids do not communicate very well in writing and this teacher does not know what to do to improve the situation. She or he learns the frustration of ignorance. Sometimes this teacher says words whose meanings are like the meanings of sentences of Francis Christensen, "In composition courses we do not really teach our captive charges to write better -- we merely *expect* them to. And we do not teach them how to write better because we do not know how to teach them to write better. So we merely go through the motions."[5] But most probably this teacher has not heard of Francis Christensen. (Hopefully, this teacher will attend a writing project or workshop some summer soon and catch up on things he or she should have learned back in school. But catch up is always a difficult game.)

When graduates from this frustrated teacher's classroom become freshmen in college, their composition instructors shake their young heads and complain in the faculty lounge about another bunch of ignorant kids who can't write a decent paragraph. "What are those teachers *doing* down there in the high school?" they ask wearily.

Research into the writing process and ways in which it can be nurtured is a relatively recent development. It was less than fifteen years ago that the NCTE Committee on Research published Janet Emig's *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* with an introduction by Earl Buxton who wrote, "This report describes an expedition into new territory, an investigation of the writing *process*. This is an area hitherto almost untouched by researchers in written composition who by and large have focused their attention upon the written product."[6] About the same time in England, Nancy Martin, James Britton, Alex McLeod and othere were beginning to look in the same direction. "A start can be made by shifting the focus, in the study of writing, away from the product and on to the process."[7] They were all aware of a good deal of wrong advice about writing included in the standard textbooks by supposed authorities. Like Linda Flower, they recognized the need for careful thought about the ways people actually write. "I ... found that my traditional background in literary criticism and rhetorical analysis of the final text simply hadn't told me enough about how good writers actually went about producing the thoughtful and effective prose I admired."[8]

It is not my purpose here to count the rich results of this research. Those results are all about us. An impressive body of knowledge about the process of writing now exists. We know much more effective ways to develop writers than we knew just a few years ago. A whole new vocabulary expresses the new knowledge: free writing, group writing, audience analysis, pre-writing, peer editing. Our professional journals are heavy with reports on the continuing research and its application. " ... the new paradigm for teaching writing is emerging," writes Maxine

Hariston in CCC. " ... focuses on the writing process....It stresses the principle that writing teachers should be people who write,"[9] A recent issue of *College English* carries a Position Statement on Teaching Composition prepared by the NCTE Commission on Composition, "Writing teachers themselves should be writers....Writing teachers should be familiar with the current state of our knowledge about composition. They should know about the nature of the composing process...."[10]

I believe students preparing to be language arts teachers need a program that is more professionally realistic than a literature major with a methods course or two added on. They need a substantial preparation in writing that examines carefully the broad range of information now available on writing and the teaching of writing. They need a wide writing experience that gives them the opportunity to become comfortable with their own writing processes so that they better understand the ways they can develop those processes in others. When the number of course hours in writing and the theory of writing approaches that of the hours of literary study required in English teacher programs, we will begin to prepare teachers realistically for the work they will be expected to do in their classrooms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1]Janet Emig, Introduction, *Mostly About Writing*, by Nancy Martin (Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton/Cook, 1983) n. pag.

[2]References to "English departments" in this essay need not always be interpreted to include my own department and colleagues.

[3]Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *The Wisconsin Alternative Curriculum Design in Basic English/Communication Skills for Grade 9*, Bulletin 2131, p. 246.

[4]Quotations taken from my conference notes of the past three years, included here only as anecdotal evidence of a kind of chorus.

[5]Francis Christensen, *Notes Toward A New Rhetoric* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) p. 3.

[6]Earl W. Buxton, Introduction, *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* by Janet Emig (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1971) p. v.

[7]James Britton, et al, *The Development of Writing Abilities 11-18* (London: MacMillan, 1975) p.

[8]Linda Flower, *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981) p. v.

[9]Maxine Hairston, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing," *CCC*, 33 (February, 1982), p. 76.

[10]"Teaching Composition: A Position Statement," *College English*, 46, (October, 1984), p. 612.

EQUITY, ENGLISH, AND COMPUTFRS

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Computer advertisements flicker across our television screens; computer camps lure our children to summers of software adventure; and schools across the nation eagerly install computers in special laboratories. Currently, a concern for our citizenry to become knowledgeable about computers permeates the American culture. Yet, there remain problems of equality concerning computer interest, access, and use. It is important to explore three of these problems.

First, there is a gender gap in computer interest, access, and use. Second, there is a problem on computer access and use for minority students, students with lower socioeconomic status, and those students with lower level academic skills. Further, there is a curriculum gap with some English teachers hesitant to use technology in their classrooms and others frustrated at the lack of hardware and software available as science and math classes use existing school resources.

There appear to be three major reasons for the gender gap in computer interest, access, and usage:

1. Bias exists in the software;
2. Social bias permeates our schools, homes and media; and
3. The content and structure of programming as an *introduction* to computers and the major focus of computer literacy courses indicates the powerful influence of computer science on elementary and secondary school curricula.

Software for student use often contains a focus upon competition, aggressiveness, rapid and violent action, and loud noises -- all of which often appeal to males more than females. The software bias encompasses more than the game format. The symbols used within the program also show a traditional male orientation. For example, cars race across screens, rockets blast into space, and TI LOGO sprites include a ball, car, truck, rocket, box, and airplane (Fisher, 1984).

Students appear to perceive a difference in the audience for whom software is targeted. Miura and Hess of Stanford (1983) collected data on middle school students' perceptions of computer software titles. Students were asked to rate seventy-five titles of software for perceived user interest. Twenty-six of the titles received a rating of primary interest to males while only four titles received a rating indicative of primary interest to females. Girls appear to perceive some software as more male-oriented even at the middle school level.

Thomas Malone of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center conducted a study of software preferences of elementary school children in 1980 (Fisher, 1984). Malone's findings suggest girls prefer fantasy, word-oriented (as opposed to graphics) rewards and goal-oriented tasks which challenge them to complete an assignment. Other researchers suggest girls prefer working cooperatively rather than competitively with their student partners at the computer (Gilliland, 1984).

Bias in the content of software is actually a small piece of a much larger, more pervasive problem in our society. Television and print advertising reflect a cultural bias favoring males as participants in science, math, and technology. More males than females appear in computer advertising. Males are generally depicted in supervisory roles, whereas females, when present, admiringly watch the male active at the computer (Sanders, 1984).

A number of anecdotal reports of computer use in schools yield revealing accounts from teachers. These teachers comment that boys physically push past girls, eager to sign up for scarce computer time. Indeed, it is no wonder that computer access is such a serious problem in American schools. Kay Gilliland, director of the Equals in Computer Technology program at the University of California-Berkeley, reports that,

> while the total amount of money spent in the U.S. in 1981 on computers was $2,184,000,000, only 4% of that amount was spent on computers in education. A June 1983 study reported that the installed base of microcomputers in the schools was 291,000; with 45,000,000 children in the schools, that is about one microcomputer for every 155 students (1984).

Although more computers are now present in schools then at the time of this statement, student access remains limited.

Teachers have also reported that careful choice of a teacher's computer helpers has led to increased computer use by females in elementary classrooms (Fisher, 1984). These reports make clear the key role teachers play in designing a classroom atmosphere which makes equity a primary concern.

Bias exists in our homes. Stanford University researchers (Miura & Hess, 1983) found a direct relationship between the cost of computer camps and the number of females enrolled; the higher the camp costs, the lower the number of girls attending. Parents appear less willing to make a costly investment concerning computer camp for their daughters than for their sons.

A third reason for the gender gap in computer interest, access, and usage may be the computer programming language which is taught. An emphasis on programming, and particularly one of programming in the language BASIC, is cited as lowering registration in intermediate and advanced courses. The Cupertino Union School District of California has found a maximum of 30% females enrolled in classes teaching BASIC while courses in LOGO have as many as 50% females enrolled. Both LOGO and PILOT are cited as having greater appeal for females (Fisher, 1984).

Maryann R. Marrapodi, former Director of math, science, and computer science in District 4, Manhattan, discusses the LOGO versus BASIC controversy.

> There are many indications that the gender gap is reduced when LOGO, rather than BASIC, is used to teach programming concepts. While there is no definitive report on this, the graphic nature of LOGO seems to be more appealing to female students than an algebraic language such as BASIC (1984).

The language used may not be the entire problem. It has been suggested that even those teaching an algebraic-like language as BASIC may find more girls interested in the coursework when goal-oriented tasks involving drawing and words are included. Projects assigned in programming classes can emphasize applications as opposed to illustrations of commands.

Teachers of programming can also recognize what MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle called "hard and soft mastery" of the computer. Turkle spent six years studying the interaction of people of all ages with computers. An intensive study of children (1984) programming in LOGO yielded insights into individual children's different approaches to similar tasks. Turkle defines these different approaches as hard and soft mastery. Hard mastery is the

> imposition of will over the machine through the implementation of a plan. Getting the program to work is more like getting "to say one's piece" than allowing ideas to emerge in the give-and-take of conversation...there has to be room for change, for some degree of flexibility in order to get it right -- but the goal is always getting the program to realize the plan. Soft mastery is more interactive. [The programmer works more as a painter, arranging and rearranging elements to achieve a particular effect.] Hard mastery is the mastery of the planner, the engineer, soft mastery is the mastery of the artist; try this, wait for a response, try something else, let the overall shape emerge from an interaction with the medium. It is more like a conversation than a monologue.

Turkle illustrates her categories of mastery with stories of how two young boys use the computer. However, she states that more girls are in the soft mastery category while hard masters are predominantly male.

Turkle believes that by understanding that soft masters work creatively with a formal system, we can make access to formal systems easier for women. In addition, we begin to understand how scientists work, as the formal systems they explore are interwoven creatively, metaphysically, with their thoughts. Soft mastery may provide a bridge, an entry to science and technology, that is needed by some females as well as some males. Turkle implies that acknowledging soft mastery as a legitimate entry to technology will draw increasing numbers of children who relate to the world through "...movement, intuition, visual impression, the power of words, or of a 'beat'" (p. 122).

What more can teachers do to enhance females' interest, access, and usage of computers? Dr. Marlaine E. Lockheed, Senior Research Scientist the Educational Testing Service, speaks directly to teachers of computing courses as she discussed simple changes in classroom and curricula that will encourage female participation (1984). Lockheed suggests that teachers first need to develop strategies to change the image of the computer center as male turf. Teachers at elementary and middle school levels can reserve the computer center for females on particular days of the week, lunch hours, or after school hours.

Other research suggests that girls use a computer more when it is placed in their classroom as opposed to a computer center. Teachers can also encourage computer placement in individual classrooms.

Second, Lockheed suggests teachers should review software and eliminate materials primarily oriented to one sex. She further questions the educational value of games relying on "hits" or "attacks" and proposes that a game-free atmosphere will promote a more equitable, gender-fair environment. (Other researchers suggest the building of an eclectic software collection.)

Organized efforts at increasing equity in computer education also exist. The EQUALS in Computer Technology program developed by Elizabeth Stage and Nancy Kreinberg of the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC-Berkeley focuses on teachers as the key to increasing numbers of females participating in computer technology. They have developed an inservice program for teachers which gives strategies and materials that can be used in the classroom and materials that can be used and shared with other teachers. EQUALS on Computer Technology has the following goals:

highlight the contribution of women such as Ada Lovelace and Grace Hopper;
encourage women working in computer fields to speak to school classes;
give students experiences which give them power over the machine;
examine computer sciences classes for bias;

carefully choose software;
encourage and develop strategies for the use of scarce computer resources;
encourage girls as well as boys to follow their interests and develop their abilities;
develop insights into analytic and logic skills essential to computing;
and develop a feeling for higher-level language constructs in general (Gilliland, 1984).

Why do minority students, those with lower socioeconomic status, and students with lower academic level skills encounter barriers to computer access and use?

1. Computers are frequently distributed unequally among school districts, schools within a district, and departments within any school. Parents and parent-teacher organizations in middle and upper income areas frequently spearhead fundraising drives to purchase computers, providing machines are not funded by the school district. Students attending schools in neighborhoods and towns with less wealth do not benefit from such donations.

2. Students with fewer financial resources attend school with others who have computers at home. Poorer kids are limited to computer access at school where the computers are often already taxed in terms of use. These students lack opportunities for practice, extension, and reworking of assignments which others may do at home. Their entry level to computer coursework is also limited as prior experience with computers enables students with greater economic power greater opportunities in upper level courses and possibly, in the future world of work.

3. Students with lower level academic achievement also face barriers. They are often assigned computer work which entails drill and practice activities rather than use of the computer to accomplish other tasks and solve problems. They are further barred access to recreational use of the computer by policies which dictate use of technology only after successful completion of other work. Students who work more slowly and must rework errors may not finish work in time to use the computers. Further, lower achieving students may not be enrolled in the science and math courses where computers are more frequently found.

What can teachers do to break these barriers?

1. Teachers can provide daytime access to computers for those who do not have them at home and can demonstrate the value computers have to students active in extracurricular and academic coursework nor directly computer-related. For example, school club members can be assisted in maintaining financial and membership records via applications software. Thus, students who ordinarily might not use the computer may see its value in their world.

2. Marlene Lockheed firmly states her belief that teachers need to stress applications programs as opposed to computer programming in introductory computer classes. She writes, "If introductory computing courses present the usefulness of computers rather than the mechanics of computing, it is reasonable to assume that issues of equity and computers would not be as great in the future as they are in the present" (1984).

3. Others concerned with equity in computer education make suggestions concerning deepening students' awareness of bias in the culture. Calling to students' attention the salary differentials between data

entry clerks and systems analysts and promoting discussion of the choices made en route to these career paths is one activity which teachers can conduct. Helping all students make informed choices of coursework and supporting their entry into challenging activities in mathematics and science will also help to bridge these gaps.

4. Teachers, parents, and community members can work together to open school computer labs to public access after the school day ends. Evening and weekend hours can be made available, thus increasing the possibilities of computer use of all of the school population.

5. Teachers can offer more opportunities for tool use of the computer to students of varying academic achievement. Those students who achieve at lower levels need more opportunities in word processing and application software as opposed to heavy use of drill and practice software.

What can English teachers do to increase their use of computers and assist in breaking down barriers of gender, race, ethnicity, and income?

1. Become aware of good software which assists in carrying out existing English curriculum goals.

2. Lobby department chairs, school administration, and parent groups with needs for technology as a support to ongoing curriculum.

3. Provide opportunities for all students, regardless of their academic achievement, to use the computer for more than support of their skills in mechanics and drill and practice activities. English teachers *can* make a difference in providing access, supporting student interest, and use of computers.

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ORAL HISTORY AS COMPOSITION

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I would like to describe here in some detail an assignment that I have found particularly successful in teaching communication skills, specifically, the interaction of speaking, listening, writing, analyzing, and synthesizing. The assignment stems from my own personal experience, although obviously it has been modified to suit the interests and abilities of my students, juniors and seniors at a large, multi-racial urban high school in Milwaukee.

In 1978 the National Endowment for the Humanities funded me to conduct oral history interviews with a variety of women throughout the city of Milwaukee. The purpose of the project was to chart the values, concerns, and choices women from different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups had made during their lives in the city. I selected 30 women from German, Polish, Italian, Irish, Russian, Hispanic, and East European backgrounds, while I also talked to women from Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions. This project, which took a year from the time I conducted the interviews to the time they were published in an illustrated booklet, taught me more than I realized at the time. I learned much from talking to older women who looked back on an entire lifetime of mistakes, joys, sorrows, and lost or grasped opportunities. I also learned much about discourse, how it is organized verbally and literally, and how stories we tell can become words we read.

With this experience in mind, I decided to try to simulate what I had done with my students in a "Women's Literature" course. I began this assignment by giving each student a copy of the booklet the NEH published with the 30 oral history interviews and interpretive essay. I talked at length about how to interview subjects, how to formulate questions that will elicit responses that are more than "yes" or "no" statements, and then how to take those interviews and find some meaning, ease and how to encourage people to confide in you even with a tape recorder running. All of these points about interviewing were merely a prelude, however, to getting students to think about the differences between oral and written communication, and we charted those differences and similarities in columns on the blackboard. Once the students began to understand that the interviews were not an end in themselves, that they were material from which the students would write an interpretive essay, then we were ready to get specific about the tasks they were to perform.

I find that students need a detailed written description of an assignment at an early stage if they are to understand the dimensions of the work. I provided my students with the following:

WOMENS'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

For this project you will interview three women who are at least 60 years old. These women can be related to you or be neighbors or friends. Your purpose in interviewing them will be to ascertain what choices they have made in their lives, why they made those choices, and how they feel now about the decisions they made. You can use a tape recorder to record the interviews as this works best, and will save you the cumbersome task of trying to write down responses as your subject is talking.

After you have completed your three interviews, you next need to transcribe them. This is a time-consuming job, and you will have to start and stop the tape recorder continually in order to get every word. Once you have the three transcribed interviews, you will study them and arrive at a thesis statement about the choices, values, or experiences they discuss. You will need to outline the similarities and differences between these women in order to support your thesis statement concretely. Your essay should be 5-7 pages, and should show your command of devising a thesis as the focus for your paper, developing support paragraphs with specific examples, and concluding effectively.

With this description in hand, my students were then encouraged to formulate the project as an experience in problem solving. They went to the blackboard and began listing in one column all the problems that confronted them immediately. In the parallel column we listed solutions. Typically, students were most aware of the problem of finding three suitable subjects. Their remarks were, "I don't know anyone that old!" or "My grandmother is dead and I don't want to talk to anyone in my neighborhood." These reactions were their first response to doing something different. Traditionally, writing assignments in class rely on the student's own internal resources, whether that be responding to a piece of literature or gathering research from books and articles. They are not used to the idea of gathering personal and rather amorphous material from actual human beings they know. Once we dealt with that apprehension, their anxieties about "asking stupid questions" or "what if she doesn't talk to me?" dissolved as we moved on to the next stages of the assignment.

After the students decide on their three subjects and select women who represent different racial, religious, or ethnic groups, we then work on the questions they must ask, their "script" so to speak. On the blackboard I have them brainstorm different areas of interest, such as childhood, parents, education, courtship and marriage, children and work responsibilities, social realities, religious beliefs, political activities, and economic considerations. Under each of these large headings I ask each student to formulate open-ended yet specific questions that will elicit detailed responses. Each question must be appropriate to the specific subject and her background. Finally, I ask the students to devise a closure question that they will ask of each subject. Possibilities include: "If you had three wishes, what would they be?" or "Looking back on your life, what are your two best accomplishments?" Their conclusion could also look at how these three women view their lives now. Are they content with the choices they made? Would they do anything differently? Finally, I ask each student to incorporate into their concluding paragraph a statement about how they feel about the choices they made and are making in their lives. What have they learned from talking to these women?

Now all of this introduction is perhaps long-winded and unnecessarily complicated, but I find that once the dimensions of the assignment are understood, the students embark on their interviews with some excitement. I give them one week to conduct the interviews, and the class during this time functions as sort of a command headquarters where the students come back and report on their conquests and set-backs. Typical reports during this period are: "I talked to my grandmother for the first time and she is really interesting!" or "Can you believe what life was like back then for women? I was shocked!" We also talk as a class about what questions work and which produce no responses of any depth. But our focus has to be on the essay that will analyze these interviews and synthesize their material. Students often have a difficult time focusing on a specific and narrow thesis statement, one that will make sense of what they see as a mass of disparate material. Some thesis statements used by students include: "Although three women are not a very large sample, it is possible to say that women tend to be highly influenced in their decision-making

by family and personal factors" or "The three woman's lives described here are representative of the limitations faced by women during the middle of the century" or "Comparing and contrasting three women's lives allows us to see the importance of education, marriage, and work in shaping a woman's values." The fascinating aspect of this assignment for many students is the perspective they gain on very recent history. Many of my students were born after JFK's assassination and the Vietnam era. Watergate is a distant historical event for them, so the Great Depression, World War II, and the 50's are, needless to say, almost equivalent to the dark ages. They cannot imagine that anyone who now walks the earth was alive during these periods of history. When they discover that people they know, relatives or neighbors, lived through these momentous times, they are truly amazed. They rush back to class to report that their very own grandmothers worked in war factories or ate lard sandwiches during the Depression. My black students invariably discover that their grandmothers were born in the South and were part of the "black migration" that came to Milwaukee during the 30's and 40's. Many of my white students find that their relatives were daughters of immigrants who describe a life of interrupted education, early marriages, and many children. The revelations they gain are of real historical as well as personal value.

The next step facing students who have completed and transcribed their three interviews and settled on a thesis statement is to complete an outline that specifically supports this thesis with quotations from each woman's conversation. Here we can deal with the proper way to incorporate quotations into one's own text, as well as talking about why and when it is important to use quotations for specific support. Although we are not footnoting in a traditional manner, we are learning in a very basic way why it is crucial to put someone else's words in quotation marks and why we must acknowledge that someone else's words are not ours. Each student then puts his or her outline on the blackboard and the class helps edit, shift emphasis, and move around the elements of the support paragraphs. This group editing is an important step in forcing students to think critically about their own work, to view writing as a fluid, flexible process they can control.

The process of writing the essay is the major objective of the assignment, and I monitor each student's progress through conferencing at the pre-writing, rough draft, and polishing stages. We also work in small groups as well for peer editing, much of which is more effective than is teacher intervention. As a final step I ask each student to read his or her essay aloud to the class for group feedback, and to play favorite excerpts from the taped interviews. These oral reports are quite popular with the students, who get a chance to hear some of the "best" tidbits from many interviews. Some students also bring in old photograph albums of the subjects in order to illustrate visually their subject's childhood or wedding day.

The response to this assignment was so good that I made the decision to ask each student to obtain one photograph of each woman to illustrate the essay. The essays and their illustrations were then "bound" as a class publication. Several students told me that they enjoyed and learned more from this project than any other they had done. They gained insight into other people's lives in addition to the practice they obtained in problem solving, interviewing techniques, organizing data, analyzing and synthesizing disparate material, and composing an essay. This assignment would work well in other contexts as well, particularly with an ethnic or a purely historical focus. As I remind my students, men also have many interesting stories to tell.

ARE ENGLISH CURRICULUM GUIDES A PUT-ON?

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If the philosopher believes language to be "the supreme event in human existence," we English teachers certainly seem willing to let it go at that. Perhaps the idea contains too much universal drama for our provincial minds. Not that the concept isn't attractive; there is something about supreme events that excites people--with the exception, I suspect, of English teachers. Oh, I guess the Super Bowl or the World Series might turn us on, but the pageantry of language? That's for philosophers. Maybe even for the birds. And yet, has there been any more exciting event on this planet than language? What other event allows everybody to both observe and participate? Grows more attractive with time? Is self-perpetuating?

So why are we English teachers yawning? For the same reason our students are yawning. We've turned the event into a *spectator* sport, and watching happens to be only half the fun. We and our students watch what others have done and are doing with language and we enjoy and applaud their accomplishments and wait for more and better things. Which is all to the good. It is just that we seldom assume the role of *combatants*. We mostly watch and wait, and that is not the name of the game. The name of the game is *do*. *Doing* is relevant. Without it, watching is irrelevant. Especially to the young.

To be more specific, I have yet to see a curriculum guide which formulates a structured, sequential *writing* and *oral* communications program from the first through twelfth grades. I mean the kind of guide that talks turkey with respect to written and oral expression, spelling out such things as general areas of subject matter at each grade level and the *frequency* of these kinds of expression. Furthermore, I have yet to talk to an English teacher who manifests even a semblance of enthusiasm over such a plan. On the other hand, I have seldom seen a curriculum guide that wasn't excruciatingly precise about literature and grammar and vocabulary study, right down to what texts were to be used and how many hours a week were to be spent in each of the three areas of study. I find this little short of appalling since it seems obvious that the essence of language is its manipulation, that which makes us participants as well as spectators. *Yet, it is language manipulation our students do the least of*. They see how *others* have used the language, and we tell them (ad nauseam) how *they* should use it. But we never quite get around to letting them *use* it except in the most sporatic of fashions, and then possibly only as take-home, thereby destroying much if not all of the spontaneity. Is it any wonder that so many of our college freshmen never reach the second semester? We are producing a race of knowledgeable mutes whose ideas of self-expression as often as not take the form of placards and obscenities.

And speaking of college, is the curriculum there any better? Does the emphasis shift? Not noticeably. How could it? I was asked to express myself in writing no more than a couple dozen times during my entire college career; orally, perhaps a half dozen times. One year at the graduate level in my field I had a workbook! Black studies and Black oriented history? Certainly, but if I were an administrator I'd get rid of that workbook first.

To end the digression, however, let's go back to that first grade and set up a hypothetical course in written and oral self-expression where the student does something in writing (say a *minimum* of once a week--in the *classroom*) which appeases his drive to create. In a self-contained

situation correction and commentary on each student's paper would hardly constitute an unmanageable burden for the teacher over a week's time. At the secondary level the burden would be somewhat greater, but still manageable, particularly if each English class writes a different day. Oral expression would have to be considerably less frequent, although this kind of thing could easily lap over into other subject areas such as social studies or science, or possibly even math--at least at the elementary level. The real purpose of oral presentation is elementary and twofold: It allows students to air their ideas in the atmosphere of a forum, at the same time accustoming them to less self-consciousness before a group. Then of course there is the side effect of discussion which often follows these presentations, leading to even more student expression. Doubtless every English teacher reading this has carried out this kind of activity. That is not the point. The point is *it has not been done consistently and relentlessly week after week, year in and year out*. It is seldom if ever explicit curriculum, and very often it is merely *extra*-curricular.

Multiply our first grade program by twelve and you have a system which produces:

College entrants who have dealt in language manipulation at increasingly sophisticated levels between 400 and 500 times. During each of those events they have had a teacher at their side, if need be, to help them better manipulate.

College entrants who have done their "thing" before a group of peers perhaps 200 times and who have gained at the very least a degree of poise they would not otherwise have had.

College entrants who can more easily look back and be conscious of relevance because there *has* been a reason for lit and vocabulary and grammar.

Teachers often tell me they can't teach writing. I don't believe them, but if I did, I'd tell them to get out of education fast. I think what they mean is that they are conscious of their shortcomings when it comes to putting ideas into tangible form and therefore how in the world could they possibly teach anyone else to do so? The point is well taken. After all, we have come up through an education system which for the most part places a low priority on creativity and practically none at all on communication skills, *but it is the only education system we have*. And we came up with it somehow, in spite of it, with a mandate which at the minimum commits us--if we have any powers of observation at all--to effect a change for the better, with whatever abilities we have.

We *can* teach communication skills--*if we want to*. Indeed, we must. *If we do not, who will?* It's hard, demanding, steady work, but any effective teaching is hard, demanding, steady work. We *can* teach communications skills, and if we are weak in the beginning, we gain strength as the process lengthens. And in the end we and our students have learned together.

All of this goes for naught, however, if we don't put some teeth into our curriculum guides. Teeth and substance. The term "teeth" suggests language that is emphatic rather than circumspect, pinpointing what *had better* be taught rather than *what might* be taught. "Substance" suggests fewer words and more *ideas, relevant* ideas. This is not a call for rigidity, but a plea for clarity--and at the risk of being monotonous--relevance.

Bertrand Russell once remarked that .. "the immense majority of educational institutions are hampered and controlled by men who do not understand the work with which they are interfering." I am haunted by the possibility that he was talking about English teachers; cheered by the fact that he said it long ago; strengthened by the belief that time will invalidate it; and sustained by the hope that he was wrong in the first place.

A SUPERINTENDENT'S VIEW OF THE LANGUAGE ARTS

WILLIAM JOSTEN
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As you all realize, language provides the means for communication between human beings. It is the single most important factor differentiating us from lower forms of life. Language development is closely related to the development of the total human being, mentally, emotionally, and socially. The content of a comprehensive language curriculum forms a major portion of our students' communication experiences and is the key to success in their future lives. Such a curriculum should encourage students to ask, listen, read, think, write and discuss. A language curriculum should lead students to an appreciation of all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. It should provide students with insights into the workings of language and help them to discover their own styles as writers and speakers.

Language is the primary way individuals communicate what they think and feel. They find self identity through language and depend upon it as a lifelong resource for those experiencing their hopes and feelings. We as educators must continue to make students aware of how language works and help them to control and use it in increasingly effective ways. Many students and teachers perceive that all the subjects studied in a school curriculum are equal in importance. I don't believe they are. Competency in the use of language skills is the basis for all other learning and, therefore, the most important subject in the school curriculum. A subject is not fully learned until a student can talk or write about it in his or her own words. A principle cause of failure for young people in the work place is their inability to handle language interactions effectively. Almost always, achievement in life is the result of high achievement in language ability. Therefore, it follows that all teachers have an obligation to foster the growth of language skills. The English teacher is a specialist trained to show students how to read, write, listen, speak and think. All other teachers in a school, however, must share in this task in each subject area. One of the programs that I am most proud of in my district is the development of inservice activities for writing across the curriculum. We are involved in an extensive program which assists language arts teachers, as well as all other subject area teachers from kindergarten through twelfth grade, in learning techniques for teaching and evaluating student writing. Writing is a means to learn and develop personally, as well as a way to communicate with others. Teachers have a responsibility to help children learn various ways of generating ideas for writing, arranging ideas, providing effective methods of experiencing ideas, and then helping children to evaluate and revise what they have written.

The teaching of writing is what I consider to be the emerging challenge of American education. In the current school setting we know that not all students learn to write well. In classes where composition is required, student enrollment should be kept in the neighborhood of 20 students because of the amount of teacher time required in evaluating student written work. Students must learn to write by writing. Their efforts to express themselves need and deserve prompt yet careful evaluation by their teachers. It should be our goal to develop students who are competent and confident writers.

The study of literature adds a special dimension to students' lives by broadening their insights, allowing them to experience places that

they have not had an opportunity to visit, and understanding people and events which would otherwise be unavailable to them. Reading and understanding is the cornerstone of the school curriculum and is another means of acquiring language. Reading is really a search for meaning and experience.

Teachers also have a responsibility to teach students about the impact of technology on language and communication. English teachers particularly can help students recognize ways that the electronic field and computers present information and experiences. This new technology demands a new knowledge and different literacy.

The state of the art of teaching language now requires techniques of stimulating student thinking processes through inquiry and discovery activities, as well as, creative problem solving. Instead of presenting students with facts, teachers need to pose problems and prompt creative solutions through speaking and writing projects. The ability to analyze and draw conclusions is essential to the reasoning process of all effective adults. Teaching students to solve problems rationally is a way to help them cope successfully with their outside worlds. A simple way to raise the level of thinking required to answer your classroom questions is to pose more "how" and "why" queries and fewer "what", "where" and "when" questions.

Research shows that teachers that have high expectations for all students, gifted, as well as those with special needs, and teachers who provide frequent monitoring of student achievement and offer feedback to students and their parents are making the greatest progress toward effective education. Together with these suggestions on language and writing skills, along with teacher behavior, we will improve language arts instruction. There is no more important goal for teaching and schools.

During the last three years, the Parker Pen Company has conducted a statewide research project entitled "Education for Employees." The study demonstrated that a strong grounding in specific language skills including an emphasis on learning to learn and a practical application of these language skills, is an integral part of training employable students. At a recent employment seminar I learned that in addition to communication skills, employers are looking for workers with positive attitudes, good attendance and appropriate appearance. Leroy Hay, the 1984 U.S. Teacher of the Year and an English teacher, I might add, points out that we are entering into a very highly technical age where most of our work force will deal with providing human services. Obviously, it will be necessary for our students to have improved communication skills provided in a comprehensive language arts curriculum in order to be successful in such human services careers. Therefore, all teachers should strive to help their students through:

1) development of the communication skills of reading, writing, speaking and learning;

2) critical thinking and knowing how to apply information already gained;

3) cultural understanding and appreciation of our fellow world inhabitants; and

4) knowing that children learn a great deal on their own and that the teacher is not merely a dispenser of knowledge but rather a guide toward new learning resources.

1984 may well be remembered as the year of the school reports. Beginning with the review of the current status of education in a paper en-

titled *A Nation At Risk*, there have been a myriad of studies on the effectiveness of American education. One common thread that extends through all of those reports is that each identifies the mastery of language arts skills central to the process of education and, most important, to lifelong learning. Clearly, any meaningful reform of our educational system must involve an analysis of the way students learn to use language.

In the elementary school curriculum, more than half of the school day is spent in language related activities such as reading, spelling and writing. I join the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English in applauding the new graduation standards requiring four years of high school English. We must insist upon at least one class of English instruction in each of the four high school years. However, I believe we must carefully explore our present curriculums and make sure we have the necessary course offerings to challenge students of all abilities. Counselors and English teachers must work together to help students make appropriate course choices.

In summary, teachers are responsible for helping all students to reach their many literate capabilities and assisting them to communicate in increasingly complex society. We must direct students to read and review materials appropriate to their abilities and understanding. We must encourage students to reason carefully, to think perceptively and to discuss vigorously. Therefore, language will help students to expand their interests and reach their full potential.

Teacher Evaluation
Continued from page 32

in such a way that the teacher who is being evaluated cannot tell that it is a criticism. Sometimes administrators are so hesitant to actually say what they feel that the teacher does not really know that it is a negative comment. Honesty, integrity, and straightforwardness are at the heart of this process.

Samuel Johnson says that "few things are impossible to diligence and skill." We have both the diligence and the skill to make teacher evaluation work; it is certainly worth the effort.

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TEACHER EVALUATION: FROM THE SUPERINTENDENCY AND ENGLISH SUPERVISOR POSITIONS

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The topic of teacher evaluation is muddied by the doubt, suspicion, evaluation fears, unfortunate past experiences, and overall trepidation which accompany this annual event. When it comes to the evaluation of instructors, we may feel a little like the philosopher-theologian Augustine when he said at one point that he felt "lost in the multiplicity of things."

The subject is complicated by the personalities of people who are involved in the process. Some supervisors see themselves as needing to assert their authority, and, therefore, they approach evaluation with a very heavy hand. Quickly an adversarial relationship is established, and this often a byproduct of the negotiation process. In many cases we would like to believe that we could avoid the confrontational mechanism and atmosphere, but it seems to be part of our lives. For those of us that are involved in negotiations as well as evaluation, we struggle with the desire to retain the vestiges of a professional relationship while realizing that there is an element of the confrontational which automatically evolves from the negotiation setting.

A further complication in the process is brought about by the ratio of supervisors to people being supervised. Recently an article in a business journal related to the fact that industry was having trouble evaluating its people because the appropriate ratio of seven or eight people to be supervised by each supervisor was being exceeded. In education we realize that such a ratio would be ideal. In many settings today the administrator is responsible for approximately eighteen teachers, and seven non-certified staff members. At the same time most school administrators feel they are responsible for the supervision of hundreds of children. At the very best this is three or four times the ratio that our colleagues in industry feel would be appropriate.

To go a little further, the current climate is strained even further through a variety of happenings. Very strange rulings have come from arbitrators, and such situations cause teachers and administrators alike to be frustrated. There also seems to be an inordinate amount of the effort of teacher evaluation going into the weakest teachers in our midst. It is our feeling that we must push to work with the best teachers in our schools; they are the people who have carried us to the successes of the past, and they should be the ones that get a major portion of our attention. Of course, we must rid ourselves of the weakest, and we should support those who are in the middle and can be helped. However, our best people often get the least attention, and they are the most likely to take new ideas and run with them.

The process of putting an evaluation document together is a key factor in its successfully being used within a school district. A committee of teachers and administrators must be carefully picked. They should be people who are personally secure; this is not the time for a cross section of our staff, either administrators or teachers. It is important that the committee members understand from the outset that their role is advisory if that is the case. Prior to the committee meeting it can be most valuable to gather

good instruments from other districts who have spent time and money preparing them. The committee can best use its time by starting with a review of what the district has in its old document; the more that is familiar to the teachers in the new instrument the less there is for them to worry about. Of course, the purposes of the document must be clear. First, all involved should understand that the improvement of learning for students is the key to the process. Second, identification of strengths and weaknesses in the teacher should always be ingredients. Third, having realistic objectives in working toward improvement must be seen at the onset.

Certain key characteristics of an evaluation handbook should exist. The following features are appropriate: purposes, procedures, timelines, teacher self-assessment and improvement guidelines, observation of instruction criteria, annual assessment of teacher performance and annual recommendation for employment, and teacher input document.

There are seven major topics which should be included in an annual evaluation whether it is subjective or objective in form. The planning and organization of the teacher must be addressed first. Questioning techniques are the second variables. Third, comment must be made upon the development and delivery of appropriate goals. Fourth, utilization of varied resources should be addressed. Then the teaching and learning climate for children needs to be addressed. The sixth area has to do with the level and quality of communication and cooperation with other colleagues. This must be combined with the individual's ability to contribute to the total staff whether it is the development of curriculum or just the general atmosphere of the school. Of course, attention must be given to the teacher's ability to address the subject matter.

There are certain important features of the evaluation process which seem to have a way of making it all work. The first among these is the inservicing of administrators in the building as to the use of the instrument. They must know the document well. It is important that they convey a sense of confidence and true knowledge of the meaning and spirit of the document, and their integrity is extremely important as the teachers become involved in the process. The administrators of the district must also have a common approach; they need to know what is considered outstanding, average, and poor so that there is not a dramatically different criteria in each building.

It is important to inservice teachers regarding the evaluation process. It is best to have someone from outside the district talk on the topic generally; however, it is important to be sure that the "outsider" knows what the district's philosophy and objectives are so that they do not lead people down an inappropriate path. It is best to try to get teachers to realize that each recommendation is not something to be defended; it is best if they feel they can learn from the strengths and recommendations which are presented to them. It is important that the teachers accept the notion that the classroom visits will not all be announced in advance; by the same token it is appropriate that they feel they can invite the evaluator to come at their invitation on certain occasions. The administrators and teachers should both seek frequent, daily if possible, visits to the classroom as a positive part of the professional effort to improve the instruction of children.

When the time comes to put the feelings of the administrator in writing, there are a few ingredients which are very important to this process. The evaluator must be honest; he or she must not "pull punches." Strengths and weaknesses should be given and the negative comments should not be stated

Continued on page 30

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